Collected by:

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G.R.F. KIRKPATRICK'S ACCOUNT OF HIS EARLY DAYS IN EDMONTON

In the summer of 1891 Calgary and Edmonton Railway Company was completing the railway line from the former to the latter, and in July of that year the people of Edmonton were trying to persuade one of the banks to establish a branch. Mr. S. Barber, then manager at Calgary, visited Edmonton and was so much impressed that on his return he recommended the opening of the branch.

Mr. Kirkpatrick, then accountant at Calgary, was appointed manager at Edmonton with instructions to proceed there at once. He and Mr. Howland and Mr. Wilkie came up in the first private car to reach Edmonton. He spent the night at "The Big House" by the kindness of Mr. Harrison Young, the Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company.

First location for the branch was Donald Ross's old hotel, a frame building on the west side of 102nd Street, just north of Victoria Avenue, now 100th Avenue. (Picture here in 1891 with Frank Hardisty, Campbell Young, W.A.R. Aldwell, G.R.F. Kirkpatrick, and St. George Jellett, a former officer of the Bank of Montreal who went to the West to seek his fortune; he was in the insurance business, representing several fire insurance companies, and was a personal friend of Mr. Kirkpatrick.) Edmonton was quite scattered at that time, and while the site was not in the business section it was felt to be the best location.

The "trail" ran from Queen's Avenue through where the Macdonald Hotel now stands along the river bank, and the main business section was on Jasper Avenue between Namayo Avenue and Queen's Avenue. Mr. Kirkpatrick refers to the following men who were leaders in the community at the time. "Dad" Osborn, postmaster; Mr. J.A. McDougall (later of McDougall and Secord); Norris and Carey owned a warehouse and store; John Hourston, hardware; Alex Taylor, telegraph operator; Frank Oliver, proprietor of the Bulletin newspaper; Thomas Anderson, Dominion Land Agent; Mr. George Roy, Registrar. There was the Hudson's Bay Co. store at the north-west corner of Jasper and Fraser Avenue, and four hotels; the Alberta, L'Hotel du Canada (where the Queen's now stands), Jasper House, and the Donald Ross Hotel on the flats of the river.

The auspicious opening of the branch was in an upstair room equipped only with a couple of desks and chairs until a banking office was made ready and this took a few weeks' time. W.A.R. Aldwell, ledger-keeper at Calgary, was appointed to Edmonton Branch and some months later Frank Hardisty was taken on as junior clerk. After serving a few years in Edmonton the former moved elsewhere and died a few years later. The latter left our service about 45 years ago.

Edmonton branch began at the beginning as our first customer was "A"--Thomas Anderson, agent of the Dominion Lands and Crown Timber, a fine gentleman who was favourably known throughout the district as "Timber Tom".

Fort Saskatchewan, the headquarters of the North-West Mounted Police, was located 20 miles east, the division being under the command of Major A.H. Griesbach, while the Edmonton post was under the charge of Inspector Snyder. Until the great bridge was built across the North Saskatchewan River in 1911, the railway terminus was at South Edmonton and efforts were made to have our branch established there instead of on the north side, and a lot was purchased at a cost of $250.00.

It was difficult to obtain a suitable location in Edmonton as streets were not then opened, although a plan had been made. However, some lots on Jasper Avenue were finally put on the market but Mr. Wilkie said he would not pay $400.00 for any lot in Edmonton. Of course it was only a settlement of between 300 and 400 people at the time and the Methodist Mission had been holding the lots at only $100.00 a few weeks before. When Edmonton Branch was opened it was the only bank between Calgary and the Arctic. Then in 1893 La Banque Jacques Cartier was opened and in 1898 a branch of the Merchant's Bank, and in the same year we established a sub-branch at Strathcona (South Edmonton). Mr. Kirkpatrick says in those days they had no conveniences: water works, electric lights, sidewalks, sewers, etc., and of course no taxes--what a blessing.

Edmonton was incorporated as a village in 1871, and as a town in 1892 with Mr. M. McAulay, Mayor, and Mr. Kirkpatrick, Town Treasurer. In 1904 Edmonton was incorporated as a city. (Picture of bank with A.R.B. Hearn, F.P.Morris,

Mr. Kirkpatrick, and C.S.W. Bridges)-----1893.

Our branch in 1891, and in 1893 and 1908 to the present is shown in our photographs. The second building and land cost about $10,000.00 and our present office was erected in 1907-8 and there was no other building comparable to it at that time.

Mr. Kirkpatrick entered our service at Toronto in 1886 and was situated at Calgary from 1889 to 1891. For 45½ years terminating on 15th February, 1936, he was manager of the Edmonton branch and we have never heard of a similar record. During his tenure of office, Edmonton grew from a small hamlet to a great city and was chowen as the capital of the Province of Alberta when the three prairie provinces were created out of the North-West Territories in 1905. Mr. Kirkpatrick still lives in Edmonton and probably always will do so and we all hope he will have many years more to enjoy the city and the surroundings he loves so dearly, and where all his life since reaching the years of maturity has been spent.